

VZCZCXYZ0012
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #0250 0711600
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (CCY AD904BAI VSC0222-695)
R 121600Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3129
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000250

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D COPY CAPTION

NSC FOR DORAN, LONDON FOR TSOU
E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: SARG USES BAGHDAD CONFERENCE TO CLAIM IT SUPPORTS
POLITICAL PROCESS IN IRAQ

¶1. (SBU) Syrian Assistant FM Ahmad Arnous said after the Baghdad Conference on March 10 that the Iraqi government and the international community should shoulder their responsibility in alleviating the suffering of the displaced Iraqis, according to the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). Arnous reiterated Syria's commitment to a secure and stable Iraq, saying, &Syria backs a political solution that leads to returning security and stability to Iraq and establishment of a new Iraq of an Arab and Islamic identity,8 according to local press reports. Arnous, statement also urged Iraq's neighbors to work together on greater border security. Official Syrian media generally highlighted the Baghdad Conference as an &opportunity8 and described it as &pivotal8 to the future of Iraq and the region. Syrian officials stressed in official media that Syria and Iran participated in the conference not due to &American or international pressure,8 but out of a desire by Syria and Iran to support &the political option for resolving the crisis in Iraq.8

¶2. (SBU) Journalist Samir al-Shibani opined in government-owned daily Tishreen on March 10 that the success of the Baghdad Conference depends on US intentions. He added, &It goes without saying that the American occupation is the reason behind every problem threatening Iraq now.8 On March 11, Tishreen ran an opinion piece in which author Muhiddin Mohammad claimed that the inclusion of Syria and Iran in the conference reflects the US failure to resolve the Iraqi conflict via military means, that Iran and Syria participated out of a desire to find a political solution to the Iraq conflict, and that the conference represents a change in US strategy regarding Iraq.

CORBIN